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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [PTER](#) [SOCI](#) [GR](#)

SUBJECT: GREEK RIOTS: DECEMBER 9 UPDAT

REF: ATHENS 1643

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) Rioting continued in multiple cities on the evening of December 8 and further protests are expected December 9 as the funeral takes place for the 15-year-old student. In Athens, several businesses and public buildings, including the National Library and a uilding housing part of the Foreign Ministry, were damaged. Large crowds in Thessaloniki also destroyed commercial and public buildings including commercial establishments on the grund floor of the building housing the U.S. Consulate General. PM Karamanlis held an emergency meeting with key cabinet members the evening of December 8 and met December 9 with President Papoulias and the leaders of opposition parties; following his meetings the Prime Minister reiterated that the security services will protect lives and property. Main opposition PASOK President Papandreou has called for the government to resign and for new elections to be held. No U.S. Government facilities have been damaged, and we are not aware of any injuries to Amcits. The Embassy has instituted a liberal leave policy for December 9 and December 10. Consulate General Thessaloniki closed early December 9 and staff will be away December 10 for training. END SUMMARY.

Rioting Continues

2. (SBU) Many cities in Greece saw a third day of violent protests as students and anarchiss continued demonstrations against the killin of 15-year-old Alexandros Grigoriadis (reftel):

-- In Thessaloniki several thousand youth marched, with fringe elements burning windows and storefronts of several businesses, including some businesses on the ground floor of the building where the Consulate General is housed. The building's security gate was damaged, but not breached, and there was no damage to the Consulate General itself.

-- In Athens, the rioters damaged shops, banks, apartment buildings and cars, primarily in the downtown area, although students clashed with police throughout the city. In one widely publicized incident, anti-riot police had to withdraw to the stairs of the Parliament building on the city's main square in the face of a large crowd. The same crowd also set the square's prominent Christmas tree ablaze. A building housing part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was damaged by fire, and other public buildings -- including the National

Library were also damaged. There are press reports of various university buildings that were damaged, and the Rector of Athens University resigned because the Government was unable to protect his facilities.

-- Throughout Greece, 33 police stations were attacked the evening of December 8. Police have apprehended a total of 130, and arrested 70 of those -- primarily for looting.

13. (SBU) In both Athens and Thessaloniki, those responsible for the violence have organized from the universities. Greek security forces continue to observe Greece's "asylum" policies for higher education institutions, which prohibit Greek security forces from entering campuses.

14. (SBU) We anticipate additional demonstrations on December 9, as the Grigoriadis funeral takes place. The funeral will be in an area of town far removed from the Embassy and Embassy employee housing. Observers also expect substantial demonstrations on December 10 as part of a previously scheduled general strike. The autopsy report on Grigoriadis' death is also expected to be released December 9, and that may spark further protests.

Government Response

15. (SBU) PM Karamanlis held an emergency meeting late December 8 with key cabinet members. Following the meeting, Minister of Interior Pavlopoulos announced that the government did not/not plan to declare a state of emergency (as some had rumored). He added that the GOG's police, fire

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fighters and other first responders were "functioning" and that the government would "do what we have to do" to protect property and lives. PM Karamanlis also publicly reiterated that "the state will protect the citizens."

16. (SBU) The PM met with the President Papoulias on December 9 and is holding separate meetings with leaders of all of the opposition parties in Parliament. Following his meeting with the President, the Prime Minister reiterated that those responsible for Grigoriadis' "unjust loss" will be punished. There were no announcements of any additional government actions or decisions.

Opposition Response

17. (SBU) Main opposition PASOK party president George Papandreou has formally called for the government to resign and for new elections to be held, telling the press, "the government cannot handle this crisis and has lost the trust of the Greek people," and adding "the only thing this government can offer is to resign and turn to the people for its verdict." GOG spokesmen have not yet responded to Papandreou's statements.

Mission Greece Actions

18. (SBU) We circulated an updated warden message late on December 9 advising U.S. citizens of the continuing possibility of civil disturbances and demonstrations, noting that a National Day of mourning was planned for December 9, and a general strike, to include the transportation sector, was planned for December 10. Embassy Athens and Consulate General Thessaloniki have instituted a liberal leave policy for December 9 and 10. CG Thessaloniki closed early December 9, and will be closed for a previously scheduled training day on December 10. To date, no U.S. government facilities have been affected, and we are unaware of any injuries to Amcits.

RSO continues to monitor security developments and is in constant contact with Greek police authorities.
SPECKHARD